



AmeriCorps VISTA
Summer Associates Guidance for Staff

Fiscal Year 2016
May 2, 2016 – August 26, 2016



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Colleagues,

We are so proud to support all of our Summer Associates as key players in enacting the vision of AmeriCorps VISTA - helping to empower low-income communities and drive positive change from within. With our 50 year legacy, AmeriCorps VISTA members - including our Summer Associates - continue to be at the forefront of innovative programs and organizations that address our country's biggest challenges. From programs that served newly integrated public schools in the 1960s to job placement opportunities turning [out of work coal miners into coders and IT administrators today](#), AmeriCorps VISTA remains as relevant as ever.

As in past years, the data generated from your Summer Associates programs will be put to good use and I look forward to reading this summer's results. For example, in 2015, 579 Summer Associates served to grow and enhance the Summer Food Service Program nationwide, a 56 percent increase over the summer of 2014. 42 states and DC were involved, with 78 Summer Associates in rural localities with populations smaller than 20,000.

Just as important are the stories of service provided by the Summer Associates; here is one of my favorites:

"Over the summer I have done many things. I have organized and distributed food and supplies to Energy Express sites, collected and documented hours of workers/volunteers, recruited volunteers, organized fundraisers, and read to kids almost every day. Of all the tasks I have accomplished, I am most proud of my assistance in teaching a young boy how to read. He tells all his friends he learned to read at Energy Express because a nice girl believed in him. That experience alone was enough to make my summer experience all worthwhile!" Emily Lease (Keyser, WV)

I have spent my career trying to help feed hungry people. Our federal nutrition assistance programs, such as the Summer Food Service Program, are a vital part of the safety net to ensure people don't go hungry in our country. I am excited that Summer Associates play an essential role in expanding that work. Summer feeding programs work best when there are learning and enrichment activities, such as preventing summer learning loss, and having Summer Associates help increase that impact is essential.

Thanks for all you do.



Max R. Finberg

PROGRAMMING

In FY 2016, VISTA Summer Associate projects should focus primarily on the following issue areas:

- Programming to add or support meal sites that serve youth and elders (e.g., intergenerational congregate meal sites), including USDA Summer Food Service Programs and senior meal programs.
- Programming to prevent summer learning loss for students who attend Title 1 eligible schools and/or Department of Education's School Improvement Grants schools.

Only current sponsors are eligible to participate in the Summer Associates program. A Memorandum of Agreement with any new organization must be in place by March 31, 2016 for the organization to be considered a current sponsor. AmeriCorps VISTA strongly encourages 2016 Summer Associate projects from current sponsors that are tribal organizations and current sponsors serving or planning to serve tribal communities.

Please refer to the [VISTA Desk Reference, Chapter 9](#), for additional information on Summer Associate procedures.

Important note: If you have sponsors willing to cost share additional Summer Associate positions, do not exceed your allocations without first checking with [Eileen Conoboy](#) or [Craig Kinnear](#) as we cannot exceed our education award slot allocation.

RECRUITMENT

As with previous guidance, we encourage sponsors to give priority to disadvantaged youth between the ages of 18 and 24 in the recruitment and selection of their Summer Associates.

CITIZENSHIP VERIFICATION

Similar to full time, regular VISTA members, a Summer Associate candidate's Social Security and Citizenship status must have a "Verified" status by the Social Security Administration (SSA) prior to the candidate's placement. If the Status is "Returned", additional documentation must be submitted to the [National Service Hotline](#) by the candidate prior to activation to verify service eligibility. VISTA members and Summer Associates cannot be activated without their Social Security and Citizenship status being verified (electronically or manually) by the SSA. Failure to verify a candidate's status prior to the candidate's scheduled start date will cause the Summer Associate's living allowance to be delayed, and could potentially jeopardize the Summer Associate's ability to serve. For additional guidance, please reference [Memorandum 12-004: Revision – Eligibility Requirements for AmeriCorps VISTA Documentation of U.S. Citizenship/Legal Residency](#).

TIMING OF PLACEMENTS

Summer Associate placements this year will be for either 8 weeks (56 days) or 10 weeks (70 days). Summer Associate programs begin no earlier than **May 2** and end no later than **August 26** of the same year. The last day Summer Associates may be placed is **June 20, 2016**.

Candidates will need to be placed on a Summer (SUM) event type in order to be tracked and activated on time. CNCS State Offices are encouraged whenever possible to place Summer Associates toward the start of a pay period. This will allow adequate time to activate the Summer Associates so they receive their first living allowance payment on their first pay date. It is important to note that if your candidate is not placed to the appropriate event by the deadline noted in the chart below, the candidate will need to be placed on the event for the next pay period. Please use the event codes listed in the chart at the end of this guidance. For additional guidance on placement procedures, please reference the VMSU's [State Office Process Guide](#).

If Summer Associates begin their service toward the end of a pay period, **they should expect their first living allowance payment the second pay date after they begin**. Use the chart at the end of this guidance to plan start dates for Summer Associates, and to manage expectations around when the first living allowance payment will be received. Please provide your sponsors with the chart as well.

LEAVE POLICY

While the full policy regarding leave for Summer Associates is contained in Chapter 9 of the VISTA Desk Reference, the highlights are as follows:

- Summer Associates receive leave on holidays observed by their sponsor.
- If a Summer Associate has an emergency or illness that prevents service, sponsor may provide 1-2 days of leave that must be made up by serving extra hours or days prior to the Summer Associate's expected completion date.
- State Offices may allow up to five additional days of emergency leave.

PROCESS FOR SUMMER ASSOCIATES BECOMING FULL-TIME VISTAS

VISTA Summer Associates frequently enroll as VISTA members. These Associates, before becoming a VISTA, must close their service either as scheduled or early for the compelling personal reason of joining the full-year VISTA program. In either case, the person must participate in PSO; training deferment for more than two weeks is not an option.

Several steps, described on the next page, must be taken to ensure a smooth transition from Summer Associate to VISTA member.

SUMMER ASSOCIATES COMPLETING SERVICE AS SCHEDULED

The Associate indicates his/her desire to serve as a full-time VISTA member. If the Associate's **service ends in time to be enrolled in a summer PSO**, then take the following steps:

1. The Associate must apply following regular procedures.
2. CSO approves the application of a Summer Associate to become a VISTA member.
3. CSO enrolls Associate in a PSO Blend or PSO Classic by the corresponding deadline.

4. Summer Associate fills out all applicable enter on duty forms, including a Travel Request Profile for those attending PSO Classic.
5. At the end of the Summer Associate term, s/he completes Part A of the Future Plans Form (FPF), selecting the **Complete my service as scheduled** option.
6. Sponsor completes Part B of FPF selecting the **Termination/Close of Service** option.
7. CSO completes Part C of FPF selecting the **Regular Exit** option, and indicates in the Comments section that the Associate is to become a VISTA member.
8. VMSU exits the Associate based on the FPF.
9. Associate, now a candidate, attends PSO.

SUMMER ASSOCIATES EARLY TERMINATING (COMPELLING PERSONAL REASONS)

The Associate indicates his/her desire to serve as a VISTA member. If the Associate's **service will not end in time to be enrolled in a summer PSO**, then take the following steps:

1. The Associate must request early termination for compelling personal circumstances, i.e., to enter into VISTA member service.
2. CSO approves the request following regular procedures. The Associate is eligible for a prorated EOS benefit.
3. The Associate must also apply following regular procedures.
4. CSO enrolls Associate in a PSO Blend or PSO Classic by the corresponding deadline.
5. Summer Associate fills out all applicable enter on duty forms, including a Travel Request Profile for those attending PSO Classic.
6. In closing his/her service early, s/he completes Part A of the Future Plans Form (FPF), selecting the **"Terminate My Service Early"** option.
7. Sponsor completes Part B of FPF selecting the **Termination/Close of Service** option.
8. CSO completes Part C of FPF selecting the **"Early Termination"** option, and indicates in the Comments section that the Associate is to become a VISTA member.
9. VMSU exits the Associate based on the FPF.
10. Associate, now a candidate, attends PSO.



2016 SUMMER ASSOCIATE FIRST LIVING ALLOWANCE PAYMENT CALCULATOR*

Pay Period	Event Code	Event Assignment and Electronic Documents Received at VMSU by COB	First Living Allowance Payment Received
201609 (05/01/2016-05/14/2016)	SUM-05/01/2016-Austin-TX	05/11/2016	05/20/2016
201610 (05/15/2016-05/28/2016)	SUM-05/15/2016-Austin-TX	05/25/2016	06/03/2016
201611 (05/29/2016-06/11/2016)	SUM-05/29/2016-Austin-TX	06/08/2016	06/17/2016
201612 (06/12/2016-06/25/2016)	SUM-06/12/2016-Austin-TX	06/22/2016	07/01/2016

All Summer Associates must be placed by June 20.

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